

Message Text

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SUBJ: F-104 REPLACEMENT: PRESS COVERAGE

1. HIGHLY POSITIVE PRESS REPORTS RESULTED FROM GENERAL DYNAMICS AND PRATT AND WHITNEY SPONSORED U.S. VISIT OF BELGIAN AVIATION WRITERS THE WEEK OF FEBRUARY 10, INCLUDING GLOWING DESCRIPTIONS OF F-16 AND ENTHUSIASTIC COMMENTS ABOUT THE F100 ENGINE.

2. THE VISIT APPARENTLY CONVERTED HERMAN DE WULF, OF MASS CIRCULATION HET LAATSTE NIEUWS, FROM A SCEPTIC TO A SUPPORTER. "OVERHELMING PROOF OVER MOJAVE DESERT-- YF-16 LEAVES MIRAGE BEHIND," READS THE HEADLINE OVER HIS ARTICEL ABOUT THE EDWARDS AFD DEMANSTRATION, HE WRITES:

" THE YF-16 WHICH THE U.S. WANTS TO SELL TO BELGIUM AND OTHER NATO COUNTRIES, HAS MORE CLASS THAN ITS COMPETITOR,, THE FRENCH MIRAGE, NO DOUBT ABOUT IT. STEEP AS A MOON ROCKET, WITH A SOARING SPEED THREE TIMES HIGHER THAN THAT OF THE MIRAGE. WE SAW THE COMBAT FIGHTER TAKE OFF AT EDWARDS, A TEST BASE IN THE MOHAVE DESERT NORTHEAST OF LOS ANGELES... THE DEMONSTATION FLIGHT DWARFS ANYTHING THE EUROPEAN PRESS SO FAR HAS SEEN OF THE MIRAGE. THERE IS CERTAINLY NO DOUBT ABOUT THE CLEAR EDGE OF THE AMERICAN AIRCRAFT MANUFACTURERS OVER THE EUROPEAN. AND AMERICA IS OFFERING

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THE YF-16 AT BF 215 MILLION CHEAPER THAN THE MIRAGE."

3. THE AUTHORITATIVE FINANCIAL DAILY AGEFI DEVOTED A FULL PAGE BY LEADING AVIATION WRITER PIERRE SPARACO TO THE F-16. ONE ARTICLE ENTITLED "FROM THE 'LIGHTWEIGHT FIGHTER' TO THE GENERAL DYNAMICS F-16 GIVES BACKGROUND ON DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE F-16 AND YF-17 AND ON THE SELECTION OF THE FORMER BY THE USAF. ANOTHER PROVIDES FIGURES AND DETAILS ON US OFFER TO CONSORTIUM COUNTRIES. IN AN EDITORIAL BOX, PARACO WRITES:

"THE AMERICAN OFFENSIVE ON EUROPEAN MILITARY MARKET HAS MUCH FORCE AND DYNAMISM. AS THIS WRITER HAD THE OPPORTUNITY TO OBSERVE DURING A BRILLIANT FLIGHT DEMONSTRATION, THE YF-16, WHICH IS THE PROTOTYPE OF THE OPERATIONAL F-16A, IS VERY ATTRACTIVE. OF COURSE, CONSIDERABLE WORK REMAINS TO BE DONE FOR THAT PLANE TO BECOME A FULL-FLEDGED WEAPONS SYSTEM. BUT IT WOULD BE AN EVIDENCE OF BAD FAITH TO DENY THAT AMERICAN AERONAUTICS INDUSTRY HAS THE NECESSARY QUALITIES TO PERFORM SUCH AN OPERATION."

4. IMPORTANT INDEPENDENT LE SOIR CARRIED TWO ARTICLES BY PIERRE BARY. THE FIRST, PUBLISHED FEBRUARY 17, SAID "THE F-16 DISPLAYS REAL FLIGHT QUALITIES," AND ADDING THAT REPORTERS WERE GIVEN INFORMATION NOT ONLY ABOUT THE MILITARY CONSIDERATIONS BUT ALSO "THE COMMERCIAL ASPECTS OF THE PROBLEM. OPTIMUM COMPENSATION WOULD BE OFFERED ON SALE OF 1500 PLANES." A SECOND ARTICLE, PUBLISHED FEBRUARY 22, SAID THE COMPENSATION LEVEL COULD BE INCREASED "IN THE PROBABLE EVENT" THAT THE 1500 PLANE PRODUCTION LEVEL IS EXCEEDED. ARTICLE ALSO POINTED OUT THAT BELGIUM WOULD HAVE A MAJOR ROLE IN ENGINE MANUFACTURE THROUGH FABRIQUE NATIONALE BECAUSE "THERE IS NO ENGINE MANUFACTURER IN THE THREE OTHER COUNTRIES."

5. GUIDO KINDT REPORTED IN INFLUENTIAL DE STANDAARD THAT THE F-16 DEMONSTRATION WAS "IMPRESSIVE," ADDING THAT GD OFFICIALS ARE CONVINCED THAT "DESSAULT WOULD NEVER DARE TO HAVE ITS MIRAGE F-1E PARTICIPATE IN A DOGFLIGHT WITH THE F-16." ARTICLE POINTS OUT THAT FRENCH REQUEST TO BUY THE PRATT AND WHITNEY F-100 ENGINE IS ADMISSION THAT "THEIR M-53 IS NOT SUPERIOR AND THAT IT WILL PROBABLY NOT BE SUITABLE FOR THE MUCH DISCUSSED FRENCH AIR COMBAT FIGHTER."

6. FELICIEN VEN DEN HOOF SAID IN WIDELY READ GAZET VAN ANTWERPEN THAT ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THE FRENCH WERE INTERESTED IN THE F-100 ENGINE EXPLODED LIKE A BOMB, ADDING THAT "THERE IS CERTAINLY A BEAUTI-

FUL FUTURE AHEAD FOR THE AMERICAN ENGINE."
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